

March 9, 2011

To Senate Committee for Natural Resources, Environment and Great Lakes

As a taxpayer in the state of Michigan, I fully support the intent of the Senate introduced amendment to 1994 PA 451, by amending section 503 (324.503) which restricts the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) from purchasing more land without first disposing of other land.

The reason I support this intent is because at this time, Michigan owns more land than it can pay taxes (PILT) on. In fact, in 2008, counties received only 86% of what was due to them under this reduced tax payment method. Furthermore, taxes have been frozen at 2004 levels! How can any community function if it does not receive the taxes it is due?

The DNR should sell land before buying any new land. Currently, nearly 5 million acres are owned by the state with many restrictions on those lands. A large portion are restricted to only hunting or protecting game wildlife – and while hunters pay a great deal for that privilege, it removes the land from other purposes according to the rules of the DNR. Some land is used solely to protect other wildlife species and no income is derived from those protected species.

The DNR purchases land in order to complete timber, mineral (gravel pit), oil/gas, and similar activities which brings money into MNRTF. However, once that land is used for its purchase, it should be sold. DNR may retain mineral & oil rights to land when it is sold. The bill only addresses “surface rights”.

Some facts: Michigan's land area is 56,954 square miles (this excludes water area) which equates to approximately 36.45 Million acres. The DNR claims that nearly 20% of Michigan is owned by State, Federal, or local governments. The State owns 4.475 Million acres or 13%. Can Michigan afford for more than the current 1/5 of its land to be paid for by citizens? Can Michigan afford to lose more tax revenue?

PLEASE SUPPORT THIS LEGISLATION so that communities can allow development and receive full tax value for land on their tax rolls.

Respectfully submitted,

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